

SOLO DANCES THE LATEST FAD OF THE 400'

NEW YORK WOMEN LEARN GENTLE LATIN MEASURES.

Mrs. John Jacob Astor and Other Society Leaders Have Successfully Revived the Pas Seul and the Many Graceful Last Century Dances.

Solo, skirt dancing, or the pas seul, is one of the latest and most charming amusements among the women of fashionable society.

It is asserted that the ordinary form of society dancing is inartistic. It consists of a series of aimless wanderings, in which the feet only are used. A true and harmonious dance should give employment to the whole body. Of such a nature were the dances of the Greeks and Romans, and also those of the centuries immediately preceding our own. The minuet, the gavotte, the sarabande, the chaconne, the gigue, the courante and pavane, all in vogue in the eighteenth century, had in them the essentials of truly artistic dancing. The movements of the entire body, including the arms, were of the same importance as those of the feet.

With a view to demonstrating the beauty of some of these old dances New York fashionable women are hard at work. Mrs. John Jacob Astor is said to excel all the other disciples of Terpsichore in this form of entertainment, while between Mrs. P. Cooper Hewitt and Mrs. P. Lorillard Ronalds—who was before marriage Miss Bertha Perry—lies the credit of being the first to introduce solo dances in the drawing rooms of swell New Yorkers.

Several classes were formed during the past season and met for practice in the private ballrooms of the members two or three afternoons in each week.

A piano player and a dancing master were engaged. After an hour's instruction, in which there were usually many amusing mistakes and a lot of vigorous exercise, the artists were dismissed, and the women, all in a glow, gathered around the tea table for a five-minute chat and a cup of tea before going home.

Carl Marwig instructed the class which met in Mrs. John Jacob Astor's ballroom. Among them were Mrs. Ogden Mills, Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, Mrs. Bradley Martin, Mrs. Whitney Warren, Mrs. Orme Wilson, Mrs. T. Sufferer Tallier, Miss Anna Paulding, Miss Lena Morton, Miss Angelica Gerry and Miss Cutting.

Mrs. Ogden Mills executes a pas seul with all the grace of a marquise of the ancient regime.

Mrs. P. Cooper Hewitt has probably a greater number of fancy dances in her repertoire than all the other dancers put together except Mrs. P. Lorillard Ronalds. Mrs. Hewitt dances the Cachucha, the Cupid, the Fishers, the Jockey Hornpipe and the Walpurgis dance.

It must be remembered that these dances are executed with all becoming modesty and in long skirts. When accompanied by appropriate music, and performed by a beautiful woman, with the accessories of sumptuous surroundings, such a dance is one of the pleasing sights that can be witnessed. A 13

These solo dances are not given in crowded ballrooms, or even before large

gatherings in private houses, but are learned primarily for the benefit which may be gained from such exercise. They help to give the dancer a full control of all the muscles of the body, and to acquire greater suppleness than is acquired by skating or the more violent forms of exercise practised in gymnastics.

Solo dancers may possibly be persuaded to entertain a small company of very intimate friends after a petit souper, or an informal dinner party, but the exhibition of their accomplishments beyond the circle of very intimate friends and relatives is never extended.

Two other meeting places for fancy dancers during the past winter were at the homes of Mrs. Henry Sloane and Mrs. E. L. Baylies. In these classes there was much hard work, and some of the dances taken up were the dignified and stately court minuet of the eighteenth century, together with the pavane, the sarabande, the military pas de deux and the quadrille d'honneur.

Miss Paulding is proficient in the La Flenette solo. Mrs. P. Lorillard Ronalds dances the "Butterfly" very charmingly. Another favorite of hers is the Turkish dance, a soft, mysterious succession of graceful poses. This is danced to the accompaniment of an air especially written for her by a well-known composer of light operas, who is no less known in the social than in the musical world. This bit of dance music has never been published, and it was under the condition that it would not be that it was given her by the author.

Among the solo dancers who have attained proficiency in the classes of the past season are Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., nee Wilson; Miss Van Rensselaer, Miss Edith Morton, the Misses Blight and four of this season's debutantes—Miss Josephine Brooks, Miss Evelyn Sloane, Miss Bronson and Miss Alice Babcock—Miss May Van Allen and Miss Agnes Whitney, sister of Mrs. Robert L. Stevens, of Castle Point.

"Dancing is music made visible," says a writer, and the new school of dancers are trying to live up to this maxim.

In Paris the same movement for a return to a more artistic and complete method has been taken up with great enthusiasm. It has been greatly assisted by a teacher who was formerly one of the most distinguished members of the ballet at the opera.

"Mademoiselle Laure Fonta gave up a position as premiere danseuse at the Grand Opera to give lessons in dancing. She is not only an accomplished dancer in every style, but has a thorough knowledge of the literature and history of the art. She has been employed in Paris to organize exhibitions of dancing at the Ministry of Public Instruction, at the residence of the President of the Chamber, at the Theatre Francaise and in the houses of various wealthy and noble Parisians.

In the houses of the Faubourg St. Germain she has given instruction in the minuet, the gavotte, the sarabande and other stately dances of the old time, in which the ancestors of her hosts were once distinguished for their proficiency throughout Europe.

One of her most remarkable achievements was the reconstruction of ancient Greek dances according to popular melodies which M. Bourgaud-Ducoudray, of the Conservatoire, brought back from Greece.

The eminent musician recently gave a representation at the Conservatoire of various ancient dances, illustrated by scenes arranged by Mlle. Fonta. He is earnestly advocating the revival of more artistic forms in general society. French taste may more easily be inclined in this direction, because many of the dances in common use are German. The minuet and the gavotte are French, but the waltz is German.

A Pretty Pupil Practising One of the New Society Solo Dances.

SUN SPOTS AND FAMINES.

The disturbances which for some time have been observed on the surface of the sun are now regarded by an eminent American astronomer as having some connection with recent terrestrial phenomena.

He is Professor Young, of Princeton, regarded everywhere in Europe as one of the few living authorities on the sun.

Professor Jevons, likewise an authority on the sun, was the first to announce that there was some connection between sun spots and panics, revolutions and political agitations on this earth. This assertion was laughed at by other astronomers who,

knowing only one star or group of stars in the sky, were unfamiliar with the sun and rushed to the conclusion that it could have no more influence upon the earth than a mere planet. Now, however, Professor Young, in a lately published work, comes to the support of Professor Jevons.

"The idea," says Professor Young, "is by no means absurd, as some have declared. It is a mere question of fact. If sun spots really have any sensible effect upon terrestrial meteorology, they must indirectly affect the crops and so disturb financial relations. In such a delicate organization as that of the world's commerce, it needs but a featherweight, rightly applied, to alter the course of trade and credit, and produce a boom or a crash."

The present sun spot, which has been in evidence for nearly a year, would thus, in the minds of many people, account for the silver agitation, the floods in the Mississippi and the prickly heat which Kansas legislators want to place upon the statute

books. From this view of the case it would not be impossible to figure out just why Corbett was beaten, why the concert of Europe received a blow in the stomach from little Greece, and why young Carter Harrison was elected Mayor of Chicago.

But a European astronomer who has been considering this subject, without going into individual cases, has shown that the plague and famine in India are the result of this sun spot, and that we are likely in the near future to witness other disturbances resulting from this same cause.

In 1863 in India and all over the tropics and subtropics, including the Cape, Australia and California, says this gentleman, the rainfall was excessive, and therefore the temperature was very much depressed. In India it was the coldest summer and year and wettest monsoon on record.

There was evidently some general cause at work, and the effects were distinctly an intensification of what ordinarily takes

place at the maximum sun spot epoch. The years 1862 and 1864 grouped round the maximum spot year; 1863 showed similar characteristics in India.

Then came a sudden change in 1865, and up to the present time, with effects the disastrous character of which for India we know too well; 1866, in fact, was just as extraordinary a year for heat as 1863 was for cold. In Australia and America the areas of heat were unprecedented.

The wave of tropical drought has not come to an end yet, and when it does the sun spot effect would tend to prolong it through the period of minimum which is due in 1900. At such times it is very rare for the tropical rains to be plentiful or well distributed, which latter is an important factor in regard to the growth of crops.

The sun spots, however, may disappear as mysteriously as they came into view and the gloomy predictions of this astronomer be unfulfilled.

